



Report of the Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

19th January 2015

Last year's Christmas events saw our town centre become even more vibrant during the festive season. The German Market, the Carol Service on the Market Square, the Frost Fair, Christmas lights on the Wellingborough Road, extended free parking and the reopening of Abington Street to traffic all contributed to creating a fun and convenient place for people to shop, and a better environment for local traders.

On Christmas Day I visited staff and volunteers at The Hope Centre to thank them for the valuable work they do in supporting the homeless in our town. I was also pleased to support the Mayor on his visit the Gossett Ward at Northampton General Hospital and send our best wishes to the patients and staff there on Christmas Day.

Event planning for this year is already well underway, and we can look forward to another exciting programme of events in 2015. At the end of last year the first two headline artists, Jesse J and Alfie Boe, were announced for this year's Alive@Delapre, and the third act will be announced shortly.

On 6th December the Cabinet and I supported Small Business Saturday by visiting more than 20 local firms to find out about their needs and plans for the future. Small businesses are vital to our economy, particularly in Northampton where we have a higher than average proportion of small and medium enterprises. Our town boasts an unusually large number of entrepreneurial people with enormous drive and energy to takes to make their businesses thrive. During the past year in particular, the Council has also worked with companies in the town centre, or those seeking premises there, through its Business Incentive Scheme. This has helped more than 20 businesses start up, make improvements, relocate or expand, creating dozens of jobs in the process.

The Council's draft budget was approved by Cabinet on 17th December. The proposals set out in the draft budget include a freeze in Council Tax for the fifth year in a row, even more support for local businesses, investment in local job creation and the Borough Council becoming a living wage employer.

On 5th January we formally handed control of the Borough Council's housing stock to Northampton Partnership Homes. The launch of Northampton Partnership Homes came at the end of many months of hard work, and sees the completion of one of this administration's key manifesto commitments. Northampton Partnership Homes has been created to give tenants a better and more effective service in the future and make sure they have a greater say. The change is needed to help raise the standard of council-owned social housing in our town, which has been below standard and failing many of our residents for far too long.

On 12th January Northampton's new Railway Station is due to be officially opened to commuters. The new station is a fantastic new asset for our town and will provide a fitting welcome for people visiting Northampton.

Community Safety

On 18th December members of Northampton Borough Council's Licensing Sub-Committee met to conclude their expedite of review of the premises licence for Nu Bar and Faces Bar on 18th December following a serious incident in the town centre in the early hours of 12th December. The Council's Sub-Committee agreed to suspend the licence of both bars pending a full review on the day of the incident, which was convened within the rules of the Licensing Act 2003. We take our role as a licensing authority very seriously and this action was taken in response to a request from Northamptonshire Police following an incident in which a number of people were injured, some seriously. The incident on 12th December was something that we do not expect to see in our town, and we will make sure that as the licensing authority, we take the appropriate actions to ensure people coming to Northampton are safe as they enjoy their night out.

Serious Acquisitive Crime continues on a downward trend with a decrease of 11.8% since April 2014, with burglary showing a 13.9% reduction and vehicle crime a 12.6% reduction. Recorded violence against the person has increased due to changes in national recording, and it is not expected to see decreases until a full 12 months baseline has been collated. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) continues to show reductions, particularly in relation to Personal ASB (-7.8%) and Environmental ASB (-6.1%).

Councillor David Mackintosh
Leader of the Council